

Sticks and Stones



f **sex** be an act, we all have parts to play with. As Florinda (Brenda Vaccaro) reminded Don Diego Vega (George Hamilton) in *Zorro, The Gay Blade* (1981): “...As the Alcalde’s wife, I play many roles, but the people see only the part I play in public. Only a few select friends know my private parts.” Most of us know them as the **carnal parts** (early 18thC), the **natural parts** (mid 19thC), the **naturals** (17thC), the **parts below** (17thC), the **underparts** (mid 19thC), the **privy parts** (c. 1565), the **private parts** (c. 1885), the **privates** (20thC), and the ever-favorite **genitals** or **genitalia**, from the Latin *gignere*, “to beget.” In literate circles they’re our **pudenda** (c. 1634), from the Latin *pudere*, “to shame”—giving us “that of which we are ashamed,” which tells a lot about our feelings toward them.

Few speak well of these parts, many not at all. Even the great H.L. Mencken was struck dumb in their presence. He omitted any mention of them by name in his classification of the body parts—reasoning that there was no place for such items in a book meant to be read before the domestic hearth.

Well, the days of the domestic hearth are over, replaced by the age of sexual enlightenment. The times call for candor. Having found out everything about **the act**, it’s now time we learned our parts.

Stand Up and Be Counted

Welcome to the club! Ours is exclusive. Women are simply not admitted. **Members** (c. 1290) in good standing include the **sexual member**, the **carnal member**, the **virile member** (18thC), the **male member**, the **privy member** (c. 1298), the **dearest member** (Robert Burns), and even the **unruly member**. It’s not that we don’t enjoy women, but our constituents come first. “Here’s to the small circle of my female friends. May it never be entered except by an upright **member** (19thC toast).” Those unhappy with the decision can always protest as did Groucho: “I don’t want to belong to any club that would have me as a member.”

*I’ll tell you a little story,
Just a story I have heard;
And you’ll swear it’s all a fable
But it’s gospel, every word.*

*When the Lord made father Adam,
They said He laughed and sang;
And sewed him up the belly
With a little piece of whang.*

*But when the Lord was finished
He found He’s measured wrong;
For when the whang was knotted
’Twas several inches long.*

*Said He, “’Tis but eight inches
So I guess I’ll let it hang.”
So He left on Adam’s belly
That little piece of whang.*

*But when the Lord made mother Eve
I imagine He did snort,
When He found the whang He sewed her with
Was several inches short.*

*“’Twill leave an awful gap,” said He,
“But I should give a damn,
She can fight it out with Adam
For that little piece of whang.”*

*So ever since that day
When human life began,
There’s been a constant struggle
’Twixt the woman and the man.
—Anon., “Whang,” 20thC*